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THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA:
PROCEDURE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF A FIRM AND LASTING PEACE AND
PROGRESS IN FASHIONING A REGION
OF PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY
AND DEVELOPMENT

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Letter dated 17 May 1996 from the Permanent Representatives of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the Political Declaration and the Declaration of Montelimar II adopted at the Eighteenth Meeting of Central American Presidents, held in Montelimar, Nicaragua, on 8 and 9 May 1996 (see annex).

We should be grateful if you would have this note and its annex circulated as a document of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 45, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Fernando BERROCAL SOTO
Permanent Representative of
Costa Rica

(Signed) Julio MARTINI HERRERA
Permanent Representative of
Guatemala

(Signed) Ricardo G. CASTANEDA-CORNEJO
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ANNEX

Political Declaration of the Eighteenth Meeting of Central American Presidents, held in Montelimar, Nicaragua, on 8 and 9 May 1996

We, the Presidents of Central America, together with the representative of the Prime Minister of Belize, met in Montelimar, Republic of Nicaragua, at our Eighteenth Regular Meeting, in order to review, in our capacity as the Central American Council for Sustainable Development, the progress made by the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America and to promote the advancement and well-being of our peoples.

On this occasion, we decided to deepen our political commitment to promote tourism, aware that it must be further encouraged as a strategic sector for the Isthmus, given the great potential that it has for the growth and diversification of our economies.

Our goal is to make tourism our countries' principal source of income, to this end, we have issued the following:

Declaration of Montelimar II

We reaffirm that the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America is an integrated strategy that includes all the activities necessary for achieving the advancement of our peoples and future generations. This new model for development has as its framework the peace process and the strengthening of democratic institutions with a view to ensuring that Central America becomes a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

To this end, we welcome the concrete progress towards a peace agreement that has been made in the Republic of Guatemala, in particular the recently signed Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation, which is an essential element in the negotiations on the creation and consolidation of a politically stable and violence-free geographical area.

We also stress the importance of the electoral process in Nicaragua, which will consolidate democratic institutions, and we appeal to the international community to give its full support in order to ensure its success.

These developments clearly demonstrate the progress that is being made in Central America. In this regard, we recognize that tourism can be fully developed only in conditions of peace and democracy, which underscores the close relationship between political and institutional stability and economic and social development.

Tourism, one of the aims of the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Cental America, should have as its main objective the improvement of the quality of life of all Central Americans, employing and training local and community groups in the efficient management of this activity, which will enable them to

become involved in the process of sustainable development; increasing well-being; respecting cultural and ethnic diversity; and contributing to the strengthening of Central American identity.

We stress the continuous growth that the tourist industry has registered as a result of increasing stability in the region and the successful implementation by the countries of the Central American region of new strategic approaches with a view to competing in a world environment marked by the globalization of international trade and the regionalization of markets.

We are convinced that Central America, owing to its geographical location, its many natural beauties, rich culture and tourist attractions, offers comparative advantages which, once the quality of services and the infrastructure is improved, will make the region more competitive on the international tourist market.

The archaeological, historical and cultural heritage of our region: its extraordinary biodiversity and its diverse natural beauty make us unique in the world and make Central America a prime tourist destination with great potential.

The substantial increase in the number of tourists to the region has created more jobs and generated considerable income, which benefits the local population. This demonstrates the importance of this sector for our economies and its potential for development.

We therefore reiterate that tourism is an industry that calls for the active participation of all sectors of Central American society, and we urge them to join us in our efforts to promote tourism in the region.

We recognize that the private sector's contribution is essential for the development of the tourist industry, since it is the principal driving force of its growth and expansion. Support for national and regional institutions is indispensable for the further promotion of private investment through the adoption of policies geared to meet the needs of the tourist industry.

We pledge to facilitate conditions for the development of tourism by upgrading the infrastructure, establishing a modern and appropriate legal framework, and training the human resources necessary for the preservation and sustainable management of our natural and cultural heritage and improving the quality of the environment.

We also ratify the commitments that we made at the various meetings that we have held with a view to strengthening and adopting the necessary policies and legal instruments on migration in order to facilitate the free movement of persons, the key element in the development of tourism.

In this regard, we reiterate our support for the measures that the competent national authorities and regional bodies are taking in the area of migration with a view to harmonizing and coordinating policies, legislation, procedures and information systems.

Tourism is one of the priorities of the Alliance for Sustainable Development. In this context, our commitment to strengthen law and order in the

region and enhance the safety of visitors of other nationalities, in accordance with the agreements adopted at the Seventeenth Regular Meeting of Presidents, held in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, is particularly relevant.

In order to reaffirm our resolute and steadfast commitment to tourism, we agree to carry out a series of activities, within the context of the regional integration of tourism, which will enable us to pool our resources, wills and efforts to present to the world the image of a unique regional tourist destination and the many advantages it has to offer.

With a view to strengthening the tourism sector, we have decided to declare this activity a matter of priority and national and regional interest, and to adopt the Regional Programme of Action for the Development of Tourism in the Countries of Central America, which is an integral part of this Declaration (see appendix).

In view of the resources required to implement the Programme of Action adopted at this summit, we consider it essential that the Central American Bank for Economic Integration redouble its efforts to secure additional resources to strengthen this sector.

We also invite the international community to support the Programme of Action through technical and financial cooperation in order to help Central America to combine the benefits of peace and democracy with the regional effort to achieve sustainable development through tourism.

We should like to express our deep gratitude to the people and Government of Nicaragua for the hospitality we received during our stay, which contributed significantly to the great success of this meeting. We agree to hold the Nineteenth Ordinary Meeting of Central American Presidents in Panama.

We have signed this Declaration in Montelimar, Republic of Nicaragua, on 9 May 1996.

(Signed) José María FIGUERES OLSEN
President of the Republic of
of Costa Rica

(Signed) Álvaro ARZÚ IRIGOYEN
President of the Republic
of Guatemala

(Signed) Carlos Roberto REINA
President of the Republic
of Honduras

(Signed) Violeta BARRIOS de CHAMORRO
President of the Republic
of Nicaragua

(Signed) Ernesto PÉREZ BALLADARES
President of the Republic
of Panama

(Signed) Enrique BORGO BUSTAMANTE
Vice-President of the Republic
of El Salvador

Observer:

(Signed) Henry YOUNG
Minister of Tourism and the Environment
Representative of the Prime Minister of Belize

APPENDIX

Regional Programme of Action for the Development of Tourism

I. PROGRAMME CONTENT

Strategic objective

The implementation of the Programme of Action is intended to strengthen the tourism sector and promote it as a strategic economic activity of priority importance for sustainable development in Central America.

The aim of the Programme of Action is to increase tourism substantially as a crucial sector that generates jobs and foreign exchange and has a major social impact. The Programme of Action is also intended to provide the national and regional agencies and the private sector directly involved in this activity with policies and legal instruments that facilitate and encourage tourism.

The success of the Programme of Action requires the broad participation of social and economic sectors as well as a joint inter-agency effort in order to ensure that the benefits derived from the development of tourism reach the greatest number of Central American citizens.

One of the strategic objectives of the Programme of Action is to increase the tourism sector's share in the economies of the countries of the region, taking advantage of and preserving Central America's social and cultural heritage and ecological diversity, which are one of the region's comparative advantages as an international tourist attraction.

II. BASIC ELEMENTS

The all-round development of tourism requires the harmonization of a regional policy which, without neglecting the special features and interests of individual countries, views Central America as a single major tourist destination that is accessible and attractive to international markets.

An endeavour of this nature requires that the basic elements of the Programme of Action be specified as precisely as possible. These elements are:

1. The political will of the Governments of the region to make tourism a strategic sector of the Central American economy.

2. In order to compete for tourists from outside the region, a concerted effort must be made to promote and strengthen the region's capacity to become a prime tourist destination.

3. It must be borne in mind that Central America is a geographical area where tourism has developed unevenly.

4. The region has natural and cultural features of great importance that give it enormous potential as a tourist destination; these include:

4.1. The extraordinary biodiversity of the Central American isthmus, which forms a corridor for species of flora and fauna of both North and South America, bounded by two oceans, with the second largest coral reef in the world;

4.2. A complex and attractive geomorphology characterized by majestic volcanoes of great scenic beauty and areas of great biodiversity;

4.3. The many rivers, lakes and lagoons of great natural beauty situated in forested areas and suitable for the development of water sports;

4.4. The beaches, seas, islands and coral reefs of great international appeal, along the Caribbean and the Pacific coasts of Central America;

4.5. The archaeological sites of world importance and the existence of cultures that preserve pre-Hispanic traditions and customs, as well as the remains of major colonial towns, villages or monuments that are part of Central America's valuable historic and cultural heritage;

4.6. The many different kinds of agriculture in Central America, which are a tourist attraction.

5. The rich social and cultural diversity is conducive to regional integration for the development of tourism.

6. The active participation of the private sector, to ensure vigorous and sustainable development.

7. The effective role of the State in facilitating and regulating investment in the tourism sector.

8. The consolidation of democratic processes and of a climate of peace throughout the region.

III. REGIONAL PRIORITIES

1. Promotion of and support for tourism within a framework of sustainable development.

2. Preparation of a strategy for promoting tourism that enhances the region's image at the international level.

3. The development of the region as a tourist destination through an appropriate fiscal policy and legal framework that guarantee and encourage investment in tourism.

4. Improvement of conditions for tourism in order to accommodate an increased influx of visitors to the region; this would involve, inter alia, measures to expedite customs and immigration formalities.

5. Development of basic facilities in areas of touristic interest, in particular in the system of protected areas of Central America, the linchpin for the development of tourism in the region.

6. Coordinated action by the private and public sectors in the implementation of this Programme of Action.

7. Strengthening of law and order in the region, bearing in mind the agreements reached at the Seventeenth Meeting of Central American Presidents, held in San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

8. Rationalization and improvement of institutional facilities for the development of tourism and of the region's existing training centres in order to maximize their use at the regional level.

9. Promotion of tourism within the region.

10. Efforts to secure international cooperation for the tourism sector.

IV. ACTION TO BE TAKEN

A. Image of the region

1. Formulate and implement, with the support of the private sector, a strategy to enhance the image of Central America in the principal tourist markets with a view to promoting the region as an emerging tourist destination.

2. Instruct the ministers for foreign affairs of the region to cooperate on a permanent basis through their embassies and consulates in the development of a strategy for the coordination, planning and implementation of activities that promote the region's new tourist image.

B. Promotion of investment

1. Instruct the competent national authorities to ensure that, prior to the appropriate evaluations, the development of tourism is included, as a national priority, in the national economic development plans of the countries where that has not yet been done.

2. Entrust the Permanent Secretariat of the General Treaty of Central American Economic Integration and the Secretariat for Central American Tourism Integration with the task of preparing, as a matter of urgency, a regional

study designed to harmonize incentives to stimulate investment in tourism in the countries of the region in accordance with their characteristics. The study shall be approved by the Intersectoral Council of Ministers of Public Finance or the Treasury and of the Central American Council for Tourism.

3. At the same time, those ministries will be instructed to draft proposals on the adoption of incentives for:

3.1. Environmental conservation and improvement projects;

3.2. Projects for the restoration of the region's historical and cultural heritage;

3.3. Clean-up and embellishment of sites of touristic interest;

3.4. Reinvestment of profits by firms and projects that deal with tourism in accordance with the rules of the lead agency in the sector.

C. Public investment

1. Instruct the ministers responsible in each country for the infrastructure sector to establish an interministerial commission which, in coordination with the ministers and/or directors of tourism, natural resources and the environment and culture, gives priority to the implementation of projects for the conservation and sustainable use of areas declared to be of high touristic interest.

2. Instruct the appropriate authorities to expedite measures to improve water quality and sanitation in the region, since that will promote tourism by ensuring the safety of visitors.

3. Instruct the Meeting of Ministers of Transport of Central America to consider, as a matter of priority in their development plans, the provision of adequate roads and road signs and signals in order to facilitate intraregional travel as well as air travel between individual sites in Central America that are regarded as tourist attractions, in order to increase the flow of visitors, while simultaneously promoting the development of such sites.

D. Facilitation of tourism

1. Instruct the intersectoral Council of Ministers of Transport and the Central American Council for Tourism to identify, with the participation of the private sector, the elements of a policy for the deregulation of commercial air transport in order - preferably on a reciprocal basis - to make Central America more competitive as a destination in international markets, thereby making it possible to reduce fares and increase the flow of visitors to the region.

2. Instruct the Central American Commission for Migration, to take measures to abolish visa requirements for citizens coming from our major tourist source markets and promote the generalized use of tourist identity cards as a means of facilitating the entry of tourists into countries with visa requirements.

3. In accordance with national migration policies, to instruct the appropriate authorities to continue to support the activities being carried out under the project of the Central American Migration Programme, entitled "Instruments on migration for the integration of Central America". The objective of these activities is to harmonize and approve:

   3.1. The formulation and implementation of regional migration policies that promote national and regional development;

   3.2. Legislation and regulations dealing with migration;

   3.3. Migration procedures for the entry, stay and departure of persons in the region;

   3.4. Regional information systems on migration.

4. To instruct the competent authorities to submit, within three months, a report on the status of implementation of these activities to the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, the principal coordinating body of the Central American Integration System.

5. To support the efforts of the Central American Commission for Migration to expand the Central American Migration Programme, with a view to consolidating and deepening the results that have been obtained to date. Likewise, to urge all national and regional institutions and agencies dealing with migration to support the activities that the Central American Migration Programme is carrying out in the region.

6. To urge the airlines that fly to Central America to support and carry out promotional and publicity campaigns abroad with a view to encouraging tourism to the region.

7. To organize, within 90 days, a high-level forum to be attended by the best authorities on tourism, migration, customs, health, agriculture and police, in order to consider ways of promoting tourism and to make recommendations on the subject.

E. Legislation

1. We believe that a set of rules and regulations that expressly refers to the preservation of natural resources is essential. We have therefore instructed the competent authorities to draft, within 120 days, the relevant legislation.

It is also necessary to speed up ratification of the regional agreements that have been concluded on the protection of our cultural heritage.

2. In order to strike a balance between commercial and recreational fishing, we consider it necessary to adopt the appropriate legislation or regulations in order to ensure the effective protection of marine and fishing resources.

F. National accounts and tourism

Recommend to the central banks of each country to include in the respective national accounts an item on income from tourism.

G. Coordination with the private sector

Instruct the Central American Council for Tourism, through its Permanent Secretariat, to maintain strict coordination with the national tourist boards of Central America and with other private sector agencies that deal with tourism.

H. Law and order

Instruct the Central American Security Commission, in consultation with the regional tourist authorities, to promote a set of measures and actions to strengthen the safety of visitors of other nationalities, bearing in mind the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America.

I. Training

1. Organize regional seminars with the participation of the municipalities and national tourist agencies in order to encourage the effective inclusion of communities in the development of tourism in Central America.

2. The region's official tourist agencies will coordinate the organization of courses for micro-, small and medium-sized tourist enterprises at the regional level.

3. Strengthen the educational institutions associated with the tourism sector, as well as academic programmes and studies in educational institutions at all levels in order to enable them to train and encourage a culture of promotion of tourism and to count on skilled human resources.

V. INSTITUTIONAL MEANS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

1. Strengthen the ministries and/or official tourist agencies and instruct them to contribute to the implementation of this Programme of Action.

2. Strengthen the Secretariat for Central American Tourist Integration as the responsible regional organization specializing in the field of tourism.

3. Establish inter-agency coordination in order to ensure the implementation of the above-mentioned activities.

4. Encourage the full and active participation of the private sector in the implementation of this Programme of Action, through the Federation of Tourist Boards and other organizations of the sector.

5. Promote the participation of municipalities and communities in the development of local tourism.

VI. COOPERATION AND SOURCES OF FINANCING

1. For the implementation of this Programme of Action, the Governments of the region, bearing in mind the strategic importance of the tourism sector, pledge to increase their support for the Secretariat for Central American Tourist Integration and the official tourist agencies. We also urge that the proposal on automatic financing mechanisms be implemented as soon as possible in accordance with the provisions of the Guatemala Protocol.

2. Request the Central American Bank for Economic Integration to continue to give priority to the tourism sector in its operative plans, promoting and encouraging the active participation of the private sector through such programmes as joint investments, cofinancing and so forth, between countries outside the region and the Central American countries. It should also support the efforts to obtain resources to promote Central America as a regional tourist destination.

3. Instruct the appropriate agencies in each country to take measures to obtain the resources needed to finance tourist projects for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in the communities.

4. Request the World Tourism Organization to continue to support and cooperate with the countries of Central America in the implementation of the activities of this Programme of Action.

5. Instruct the Secretariat for Central American Tourist Integration to make efforts to find partners to assist in the implementation of this Programme.

VII. FOLLOW-UP MEASURES

The Central American Tourism Council, through its Executive Secretariat, shall be the organization responsible for following up the above-mentioned activities, for which the appropriate periodic evaluations will be carried out. The evaluations shall be raised to the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, as the principal coordinating body of the Central American Integration System, in accordance with the provisions of the Tegucigalpa and Guatemala Protocols.

VIII. MEDIA

Urge the media to assist in the efforts that the public and private sectors of Central America are making to promote the region as an attractive and safe tourist area. To this end, regional and national seminars will be organized to report on the achievements of this Programme of Action.